

Establishing a Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (BSSR) Integration Working Group:

Building on successes and identifying new opportunities

Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR)

Congressional Direction

“The Committee believes that a more robust and focused NIH commitment to behavioral science research and training would yield significant improvements to the nation’s health due to the important connections between behavior and health. Most of the leading public health issues facing our nation— including cancer, addiction, heart disease, mental illness, diabetes, violence, and AIDS—are rooted in individual and social behavior, yet behavioral science is decentralized across NIH’s Institutes and Centers, and the NIH commitment to manage and directly fund this important research is limited. The Committee directs the Director to convene a special advisory panel of behavioral scientists and other community experts to complete an assessment providing recommendations on how to better integrate and realize the benefits to overall health from behavioral research at NIH. The Committee requests that this assessment be finalized before the end of fiscal year 2021 and that a report be submitted to the Committee at that time.”

Proposal

Convene a Working Group of the Council of Councils to serve as the panel and provide recommendations

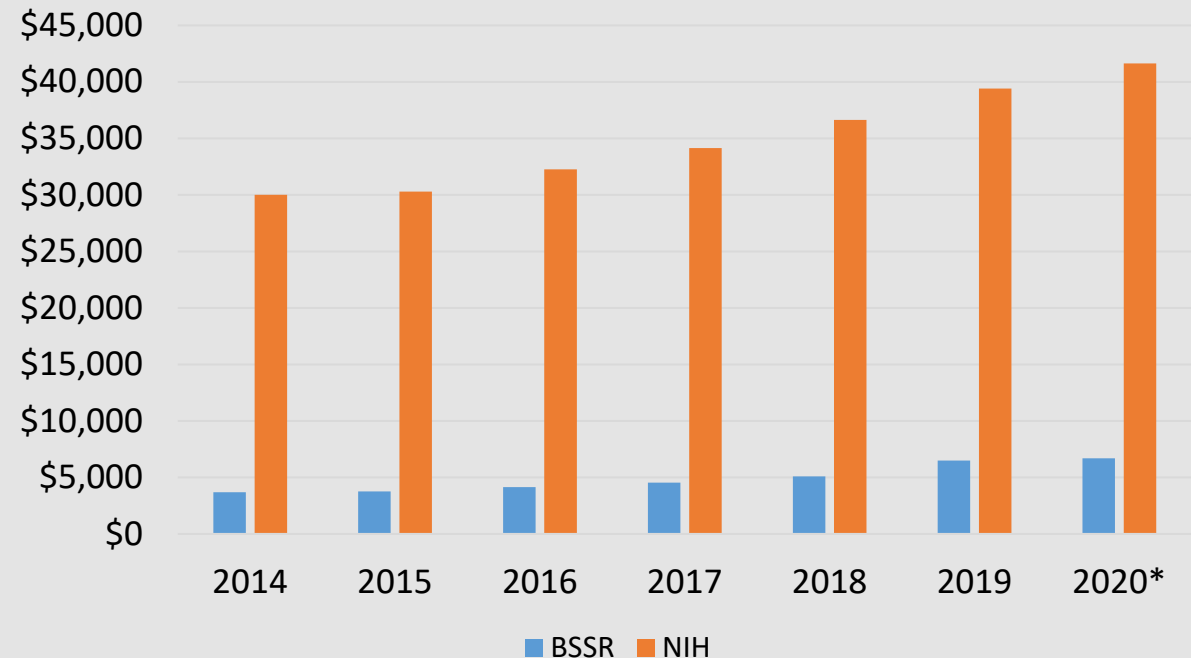
BSSR at NIH



Trends in BSSR Funding

- Funding nearly doubled in the last seven years
- BSSR now accounts for about 16% of total extramural funding

BSSR Funding as A Proportion of NIH Funding

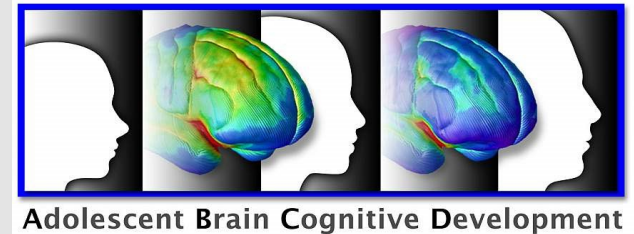
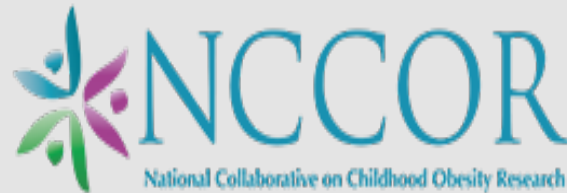
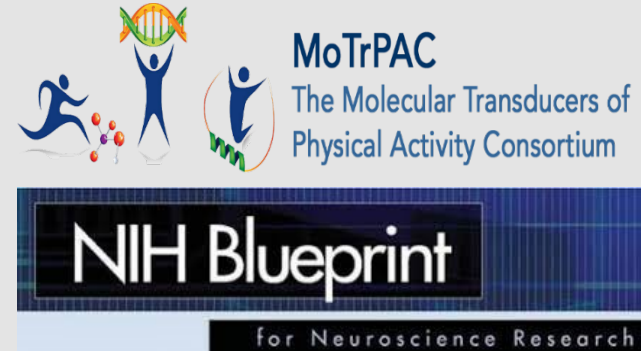


*2020 BSSR funding is an estimate

Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research

- At Congressional direction, OBSSR was established with in 1995 in recognition of the importance of health-related behavioral and social sciences and their contributions to the NIH mission.
 - Enhance the impact of health-related behavioral and social sciences research
 - Coordinate behavioral and social sciences research conducted or supported by the NIH and integrate these sciences within the larger NIH research enterprise
 - Communicate health-related behavioral and social sciences research findings to various stakeholders within and outside the federal government

Examples of Trans-NIH BSSR Integration



Proposed Charge of CofC Working Group

- Assess the current status of BSSR in NIH supported research and training and identify existing processes that should continue or be enhanced as well as new opportunities for enhancing processes, coordination and integration of BSSR into research conducted across the Institutes, Centers, and Offices.
- To fulfill this charge, the Working Group will seek input from experts in behavioral and social sciences research and in the function and structure of the NIH research enterprise.
- Prepare a report including recommendations on ways to encourage greater BSSR integration and relevance to the research supported across the NIH, including but not limited to the functions of the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research.
- The report and recommendations of the BSSR WG will be submitted to the Council of Councils for further consideration.

Proposed Composition of Working Group

- Co-Chairs: Christine Hunter, OBSSR and Paul Kenny, Council of Councils member
- Members selected from Institute, Center and Office Councils/Advisory Boards
- Approximately 8-10 members
- Supported by OBSSR Staff, Caitlin Burgdorf and Katie Morris, and the SCG contract

Timeline*

January 2021	Present proposal of the working group to Council of Councils
February 2021	Initiate SCG contract for support; invite members
March 2021	Develop introductory materials, schedule meetings for the year
April 2021	First meeting
July 2021	Second meeting
September 2021	Third meeting, report outline written and action items
November 2021	Fourth meeting, draft of the report written
January 2022	Present final report to Council of Councils

*This timeline assumes approval for an extension of the report deadline (currently Sept 30, 2021, but a six-month extension has been requested)